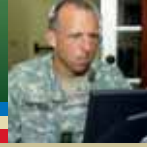


# How to be a successful distance learner.

A publication from the  
Army Training and Doctrine Command.





Distance Learning (DL) delivers training at the right place and right time through the application of multiple means and technologies.

Some learning is based on a scheduled time, lead by an instructor and has real time student to instructor interaction.

At other times learning is completed individually within a specified time limit and has no real time interaction between student and instructor.

## 12 Tools to employ in becoming a successful distance learner.



1. **Summarize and annotate readings:**  
(See Note Taking Process)
2. **Annotate text:**  
State key ideas briefly in your own words in the margins of the text.
3. **Visualize text:**  
Use graphic organizers, concept maps, flow charts, matrices, etc.
4. **Formulate and answer questions:**  
Turn the reading from a passive task to an active one. (See Question Stems)
5. **Think out loud:**  
You'll improve your understanding and remember more.
6. **Develop thought provoking questions:**  
They'll generate deeper understanding and better performance.
7. **Take notes:**  
Take and review outline-style notes to better comprehend material.  
(See Note Taking Process)
8. **Study strategies:**  
Adjust your studying strategies to match testing requirements.
9. **Be an active learner:**  
Active learners motivated to achieve will seek guidance when needed.
10. **Manage time:**  
If you manage your time, you'll have more time to learn.
11. **Establish goals:**  
You'll direct your attention, increase persistence and stay motivated.
12. **Relax:**  
It's okay to relax, you'll do better studying and taking tests.

# | Time management



## ABC Prioritization System

Managing your Soldiering responsibilities and DL requirements can be challenging. This system provides you with a method of prioritizing your work and study requirements. There are three levels of priority: A, B and C.

### Category A:

High priority, need swift action.

### Category B:

Important yet not as time-sensitive, but required for goal accomplishment.

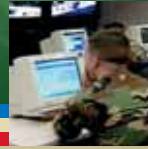
### Category C:

Delay of this tasking won't hurt overall goal accomplishment, but could cause it to take longer.

Begin working your Category A priorities first, leaving Category C items until no higher priority work remains. How do you know which category to put work into when accomplishing your daily mission? You can look at the following areas for ideas and/or answers:

- Who assigned you the task?
- What is the assigned due date?
- What is the urgency or lack there of?
- Was the need identified by a supervisor or an instructor?

# | How to study



Your study environment has a big effect on how efficiently you study. Before you begin to study, check for the following conditions:

- **Office traffic:**  
How busy is the office you work in?
- **Interruptions:**  
Will your subordinates, supervisors or family be interrupting you?
- **Noise:**  
What is the noise level?
- **Comfort:**  
Is the area uncluttered and organized? Do not use your bed to study. Before long you'll be studying your eyelids instead of the material.
- **Lighting and temperature:**  
Is there enough light? Ensure the room isn't too warm. It's better to study in a cool room than a warm room.
- **Equipment and materials:**  
Do you have everything that is required? Notebooks? Pencils? Laptop? Water?

## Reading skills



Students often read textbooks and training manuals the same way they read pleasure books—begin with the first page of the chapter and read to the end of the chapter, without stopping. While this method is fine for novels and mysteries, it is not likely to result in the level of understanding and retention needed for most textbooks. The use of survey, question, read, recite, and review (SQ3R) provides a method of reading textbooks and training manuals to enhance understanding and retention of material. The following will explain the steps of the SQ3R process:

**Survey:**

Gather the information necessary to focus on the chapter and formulate questions for yourself as you read the chapter.

**Question:**

Now that you have surveyed the entire chapter, turn boldface headings into one or more questions and write down your question on the left side of a piece of paper.



- **Read:**

Reading the section fills in the information around the mental notes you have been building by surveying the chapter and developing questions about the section. As you read the section, look for the answers to your questions and jot them down, in your own words, on the right side of your piece of paper.

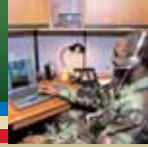
- **Recite:**

Reciting material as you go retrains your mind to concentrate and learn as it reads. Look at the question(s) you wrote down before you read the section. Cover your answers with a piece of paper and see if you can answer the questions from memory.

- **Review:**

Once you've finished reading the entire chapter using the survey, question, read and recite steps, go back over all your questions. Cover the answers to the questions you've written down and see if you can still recite them.

# Memory Strategies



- **Monitor your comprehension.**  
You can only remember and fully use ideas that you understand. Find ways to monitor your comprehension and continuously ask yourself “*Do I understand this?*”
- **Generate your own examples.**  
When you can generate your own examples, you demonstrate your understanding and your memory is enhanced.
- **Think in pictures, colors and shapes.**  
Associate your own mental pictures to the academic content. In class and text notes use color to highlight headings and other key ideas.
- **Use mnemonics.**  
Mnemonics are memory training devices to aid in remembering. There are many types of mnemonics and, no doubt, you will have used some of them (ie: SALUTE Report – Size, Activity, Location, Uniform, Time, Equipment). As you study for your tests, use your imagination to generate fitting mnemonics for some of the key information in your courses.
- **Repetition.**  
The more times you go over something, the better your memory will be of that information. However, each time you go through something, try to find a different angle so that you are not just repeating exactly the same content. You can improve your listening skills with some of the following strategies:

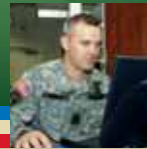


# | Listening Skills



- **Focus on content, not delivery.**  
Have you ever counted the number of times an instructor clears his/her throat in a fifteen minute period? If so, you weren't focusing on content.
- **Avoid emotional involvement.**  
When you are too emotionally involved in listening, you tend to hear what you want to hear—not what is actually being said.
- **Avoid distractions.**  
Don't let your mind wander or be distracted by fellow Soldiers during training presentations.
- **Treat listening as a challenging mental task.**  
You need to concentrate on what is said so that you can process the information into your notes.
- **Ask questions.**  
Asking relevant questions keeps you on your toes.

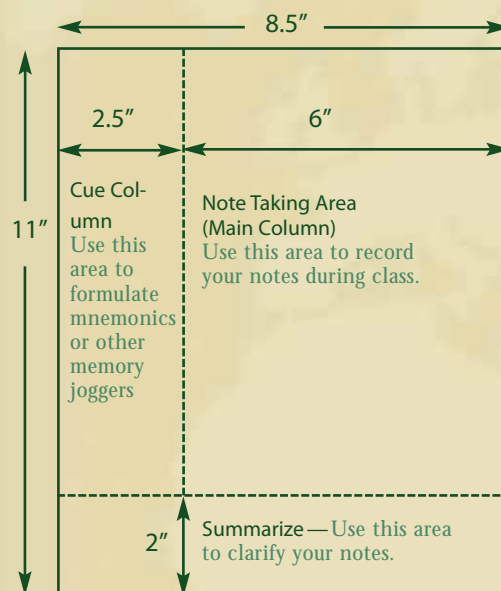
# Taking Notes



Taking notes can be a frustrating, almost overwhelming, job. Getting organized is the best way to deal with the rush of incoming information.

- **Note Taking – Cornell System.**

To take notes using the Cornell System, rule each sheet as illustrated, with a 2.5 inch margin.



**Note taking area:** Record material as fully and accurate as possible.

**Cue Column:** As soon as possible, reduce your notes to concise jottings as clues for reciting, reviewing and reflecting on the material.

**Summaries:** Sum up each page of your notes in a sentence or two.



This format provides the perfect opportunity for following through with the 5R's of note taking:

- **Reduce:**  
As soon after as possible, summarize the content concisely in the Cue Column. Summarizing clarifies meanings and relationships, reinforces continuity, and strengthens memory.
- **Recite:**  
Cover the Note Taking area and using only your jottings in the Cue Column, repeat the content in your own words. Then, verify what you have said.
- **Reflect:**  
Draw out opinions from your notes and use them as a starting point for your own reflections on the course and how it relates to your other courses.
- **Review:**  
Spend 10 minutes every week in quick review of your notes, to retain what you have learned.
- **Record:**  
During the presentation, record in the main column the meaningful content. Write legibly.

## Deepen your understanding through self-questioning

Generic question stems can be used with any content to deepen your understanding and memory of the material you're reviewing.

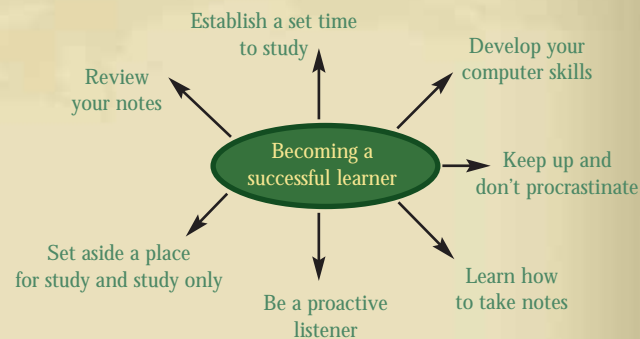
### Question Stems:

- What is another way to use.....?
- How would changing.....affect the outcome?
- How does this affect you.....?
- What is good about.....?, and what is bad about.....?
- What do you already know about.....?
- What is.....similar to?
- Explain.....in your own words?
- How does.....affect your work or your life?
- How is.....similar to.....?
- .....is important because?
- What are other solutions to.....?
- What are causes of.....? Why?
- Do you agree with.....? Why? Why not?
- How would.....affect the Army?
- What are some alternative solutions to.....?
- What is the opposite argument for.....?
- What would your.....think of.....?
- What do you already know about.....?
- What was new or different about.....?
- Why is....important? Why is it not important?

# Mind mapping



Mind mapping involves writing down a central idea and thinking up new and related ideas which radiate out from the center.



- **Put main idea in the center:**  
Turn a page on its side and do a mind map in “landscape” style. This allows maximum space for other ideas to radiate out from the center.
- **Look for relationships:**  
Use lines, colors, arrows, branches or some other way of showing connections between the ideas generated on your mind map
- **Leave lots of space:**  
Some of the most useful mind maps are those which are added to over a period of time.
- **Draw quickly on unlined paper without pausing, judging or editing:**  
Think creatively and in a non-linear manner. Record lots of related ideas.

# | Netiquette

1. Never give your user ID or password to another person.
2. Never assume your email messages are private or that they can be read by only yourself or the recipient. Never send something that you would mind seeing on the evening news.
3. Keep paragraphs and messages as short as possible, and to the point.
4. Focus on one subject per message and always include a pertinent subject title for the message.
5. Include your signature at the bottom of Email messages when communicating with people who may not know you personally. Your signature should include your name, position, affiliation, and email address.
6. Capitalize words only to highlight an important point or to distinguish a title or heading. Capitalizing whole words that are not titles is generally termed as SHOUTING.
7. Use \*asterisks\* surrounding a word to make a stronger point.
8. Acronyms can be used to abbreviate when possible. However, messages that are filled with acronyms can be confusing and annoying to the reader. Spell out acronyms on the first use, unless they're familiar to the reader.
9. Cite all quotes, references and sources and respect copyright and license agreements.

## | Additional resources



<https://www.spider.hpc.navy.mil/>

The HPC SPIDER provides a wide range of information to help you analyze performance requirements and use the latest research to develop training solutions, integrate learning tools and evaluate results.

<http://lib.newpaltz.edu/distance/success.html>

Resources for Students and Faculty who want to know more about Distance Learning.

[http://www.icn.org/welcome/learner\\_tools.html](http://www.icn.org/welcome/learner_tools.html)

Tools to assist you as you investigate and pursue your education at a distance.

<http://www.oakton.edu/learn/distlearner.htm>

Suggestions for successful distance learners.

[http://laurentian.ca/cce/Possibilities/01\\_menu.html](http://laurentian.ca/cce/Possibilities/01_menu.html)

Facts, tips and stories for distance learners.

### **The Mind Map Book**

by Tony Buzan with Barry Buzan. Penguin Books, New York, 1993. Discover new and exciting ways to learn, remember, and record information.

### **Becoming a Master Student**

by David Ellis. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2006. Tools, techniques, examples, procedures, processes, and resources for success.

### ***Becoming a Critical Thinker***

by Vincent Ryan Ruggiero. Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 2002. The ability of thinkers to take charge of their own thinking.



A publication from the Army Training and Doctrine Command. For additional information on our Distance Learning program, or additional copies of this brochure, please contact the Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) at (757) 788-5532.

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